

These proposals we see coming out of the House of Representatives undermine the integrity of the program. I think it is important for us in the Senate to not allow them to put the health and financial security of our seniors in jeopardy. That is why I have introduced the Medicare Protection Act. It is a responsible commonsense solution. It prevents budget schemes that would reduce Medicare benefits and restrict eligibility, and it sends a strong message that Medicare should not be dismantled, privatized, or turned into a voucher system.

The promise of Medicare is one we must keep. The Senate should pass the Medicare Protection Act. I ask that we keep Medicare strong and affordable for today's seniors and for future generations.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I applaud and commend my friend the Senator from Arkansas. This is very visionary legislation. I support what he is doing, and we are going to do everything we can to move forward on this legislation. We would do it more quickly except we have a few problems with people over here. So we are going to do our best.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JILL A. PRYOR TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 840.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Jill A. Pryor, of Georgia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. There is a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Jill A. Pryor, of Georgia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Christopher A. Coons, Sheldon Whitehouse, Patty Murray, Amy Klobuchar, Maria Cantwell, Jack Reed, Bill Nelson, Elizabeth Warren, Tom Udall, Mazie Hirono, Richard Blumenthal, Barbara Boxer, Tom Harkin, Benjamin L. Cardin, Charles E. Schumer.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

BRING JOBS HOME ACT—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, Senators COONS, SESSIONS, STABENOW, and WALSH be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each prior to the cloture vote on S. 2569, with Senator COONS being the first to be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Delaware.

PARTNERSHIP WITH AFRICA

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I have never been more optimistic about Africa and about the potential for a U.S. partnership with Africa than I am today.

Every year I host a conference in my home State of Delaware called "Opportunity: Africa" that brings together Delawareans and Africans, leaders from across our country and from the continent interested in building and strengthening new ties. Every year it has grown in participation, in the scope of issues we have looked at, and in the number of Delaware businesses interested in the opportunities in this continent of 54 countries. At this past March's conference, President Clinton delivered the keynote.

The hunger to build new relationships between business, government, the faith community, and those in the African diaspora is undeniable. What is required of us is to think anew and dedicate ourselves to building partnerships of mutuality and that last. In this Chamber that will mean passing a reauthorized African Growth and Opportunity Act that does more to encourage and facilitate real two-way trade than the current law and to take up and pass the bipartisan Power Africa law that will strengthen investment in infrastructure and in electricity across the continent.

Next week it means coming together with Africa's government and business leaders to forge new relationships built on mutual respect and the opportunities we share.

I urge my colleagues and my friends throughout the business community to seize this opportunity and focus on the bright future it could create. An Africa that trades with us, that can defend itself, that can secure itself, and that empowers its citizens is the Africa we see, and that is an Africa which we in the United States are uniquely suited

to help its people build. We have already built a powerful foundation for partnership through our investments in public health and education, clean water, democracy, and good governance.

After 50 years in the Peace Corp and more than a decade of PEPFAR—President Bush's groundbreaking commitment to combating HIV and AIDS—we are better regarded in Africa than in anywhere else in the world. From our universities, to our businesses, to our military training and partnerships, to the vibrant Africa diaspora community spread throughout this land, we have tools no other Nation has. The opportunity for progress is extraordinary. By helping to build a broad and sustainable middle class across this continent, American workers and businesses will have more people to sell their products to and more markets in which to invest. The more we partner with African businesses, the stronger they will become.

Genuine partnerships such as this must be the foundation for our relationships with Africa going forward, and we have a lot to gain as well.

As many have commented, in the last decade 6 out of 10 of the fastest growing economies in the world have been in Africa, and that number will only rise. Other countries have noticed the opportunity. China's exports to Africa, for instance, have outgrown ours 3 to 1 since 2000, and 5 years ago China eclipsed us as Africa's largest trading partner. So it is no surprise that since 2000, China has hosted five summits with African heads of state. Let's be clear, the Chinese, in seeking opportunities for this century, will not miss the "next China." So we have a lot of ground to make up.

It is also critical we recognize that we should not just mimic the ways in which the Chinese are seeking opportunity in Africa. They bring a policy of nonintervention in domestic affairs. We bring American values—a focus on democracy, on governance, on human rights, as well as the attractiveness of our technology, our resources, and the relationship with our diaspora community.

This week we have had remarkable opportunities for our President, our Secretary of State, and several of us from this Chamber to meet with young African leaders as part of a program that brought 500 inspiring young African leaders to Washington.

Next week we will welcome more than 40 heads of state from across the continent—a summit that I hope signals the next big step in building strong and sustainable partnerships throughout the continent.

President Obama, leaders from this Chamber, leaders from the Cabinet, and from across America's corporate community will join for 3 days to allow us to refocus our efforts on the continent, to seize this moment, and to move forward. It is my hope that this Chamber, this Congress, will take advantage of